

To my sister Ro, the little person who makes me want to make this planet a better place.



At the center of town, under buildings galore, lived a young little boy, on the fourteenth floor.

From his window he looked at the city below "There are so many things that I wish I could own."

Clothes, and cars, and candies, jump ropes, and Legos, and toys, there was nothing he didn't want, especially the stuff that made noise.



But what made noise this moment was hunger,

as he ran towards his parents' room, "Could we please go to McDonalds's?", he asked, and was met with an air of gloom.

"Maybe another time," said Mom,
"Maybe next week,"
but Ash wasn't in the business
of admitting defeat.



So he pleaded and pleaded, promised to be good at school promised to make his bed and even to clean up Ava's drool.

"Okay," said Dad, and Ash's face lit up thinking of the little toy which with him would end up.



So they got in the car, travelled a few blocks, and in impatience he waited for the numbers on the clock.

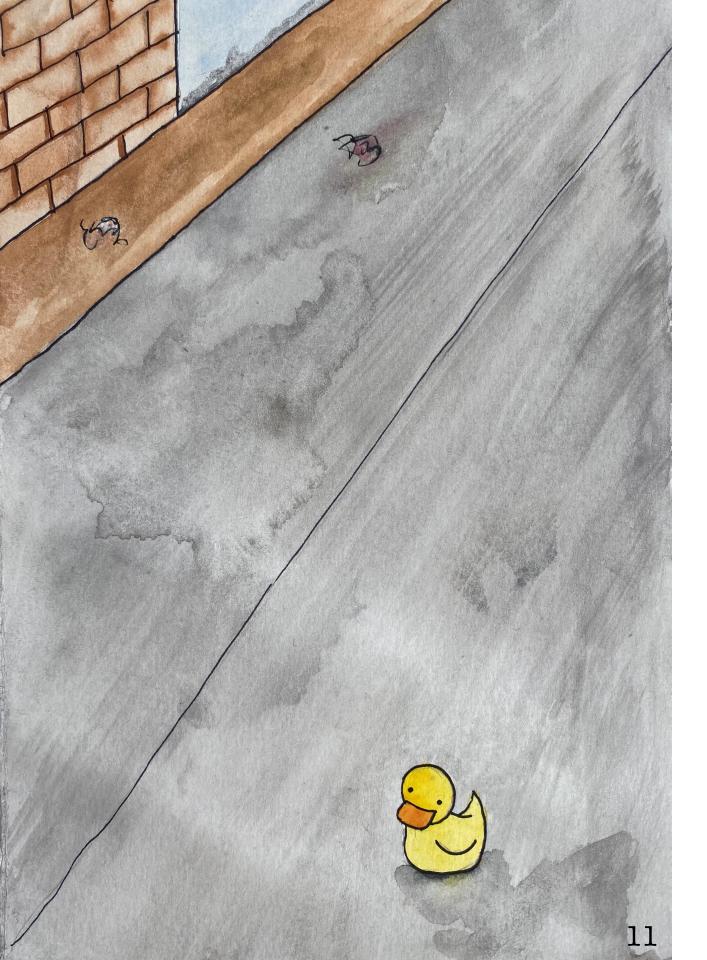


"One Happy Meal, please, and two Quarter Pounders with cheese, a Sprite, a Fanta, a Coke, and one of these."

Dad referred to the toys, which was Ash's favorite part, but today's toy was a rubber duck which was not a work of art.

Mom saw Ash's face, and carefully reminded him he had promised to be good, "you get what you get, so be happy with it..."

So with a forced smile on his face, Ash ate his burger and fries, but this disappointing rubber duck had ruined his surprise.



When they left from McDonald's, Ash was angrier than before threw a tantrum, or two, and even threw the duck on the floor.

And as they went home on the car, something terrible occurred.

The rubber duck Franklin stood alone in the curb.



Thankfully,
Mr. Debris picked him up
and put him in a bin
filled up to the top.

Although better than the curb, the bin was quite smelly, filled up with everyone's stuff, from drinks to newspapers to spaghetti.

The next morning,
Franklin was early awakened
by large men in uniforms
with plans in the making.

They threw him in a truck, with no regard for his well-being Franklin's only wish was that Ash had kept him, instead of fleeing.



And so he travelled hundreds of miles, he says, but he's not exaggerating, they took him across the country into a mountain too tall for skating.

In it were bottles, and straws, and tin cans, rubber-soled shoes, shirts, and plastic bags, old toys, old phones, old furniture, milk cartons, light bulbs, and leftover tags.

The more Franklin looked, the more he found, tires, batteries, all sorts of wraps, used diapers and apples, McDonald's cups, and even an impressive amount of food scraps.

All trash had different accents, different languages on their skin, everyone came from different places, but all from the bin.

Franklin wondered where he was. It was a landfill, towering proud and strong: "I will never disappear," it claimed, but maybe it was wrong.



After weeks of being there, just waiting to be found, a gust of wind lifted Franklin off the ground.

Although wary, he was excited for, at last, he had been out of that stinking pile of trash and now embarked on a new route.

And that wind carried him through the skies and the clouds, through the city and the people, into another stream of crowds.



He was lucky he could float but was promptly knocked around by the waves of the oceans and the currents underground.

Franklin turned and turned, a voyage nauseous and slow until finally he saw land and yelled out: "Land ho!"



But what seemed like an island, in the middle of the sea, had no ground in which to stand on or any animals or trees.

It was a patch of garbage in the middle of the Pacific where the waves and water beneath were as far gone as hieroglyphics.

So big it was that it barely even moved; it was impossible to leave with slim chances of being removed.



And at this moment Franklin realized, this is what happened to all trash, it travelled and travelled and travelled, until no memory of it remained in Ash.

And no memory of it remained in anyone, trash just "disappeared" down the drain, down the garbage chute, into the bin, but really it reappeared again.

It reappeared in the oceans, in the stomachs of animals confounded, in the landfills around the world, until the planet was surrounded.

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Maybe next time you want something, you'll think twice, because the perilous journey of trash is not worth its price.

Maybe next time you don't want a toy, you'll give it to your brother, to your sister, to your cousin, to your neighbor or your mother.

Maybe next time you throw away food, you'll remember of the landfill, and consider all the people whose tummies are not filled.

And maybe next time you think of trash, you'll look back on this story, of a young boy named Ash and the rubber duck allegory.



But although this all seems frightening, it does not have to be lifelong because if we all make little changes, the landfill will be wrong:

Because when looking out his window, Ash no longer sees stuff he wants, he sees a planet full of trash and the generations that it haunts.

He sees opportunities in the corners, innovations through the gate, understanding in the people and a world that could have a different fate.

